

## **KANEGASAKI SISTER CITY COMMITTEE**

### **Fiscal Year 2012**

**Committee Members: Denise Boyd, Florence Boynton, Juliana Dupre, Eli Cohen, Stephanie Joyce, Aaron Kropf, Helen MacMellan, Julia Mahoney, Kathleen Woods Masalski (Interim Chair). Others: Yuko Takahashi, Nancy Pagano (Staff Liaison), Diana Stein (Select Board Liaison).**

Between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012, the Kanegasaki Sister City Committee (KSCC) remained dedicated to its purpose: to promote friendship and ongoing relations with the Town of Kanegasaki, Japan, Amherst's sister city since 1993. To accomplish its purpose, the Committee sponsored special events and maintained contacts between both the residents and governmental bodies of the two communities that contributed to the mutual benefit of each. Following is a rough chronology of events related to the KSCC charge during fiscal year 2012.

The summer months included several KSCC activities. A fundraising event at Bertucci's Restaurant in July saw approximately 200 people "dining in or out," which resulted in the KSCC's taking in more than \$600 for Japan Disaster Relief." The money was wired to Kanegasaki to distribute as the sister city saw as appropriate. This amount was in addition to the \$2,000 that had been raised by the Committee earlier, for the same purpose. Ms. Yoriko Kimura, a special guest from Sendai was among the 200 at Bertucci's. During her stay in Amherst, several Committee members and friends hosted Ms Kimura, a member of the Operating Committee of Kanegasaki Library's Emily Dickinson Archive Center.

Amherst was invited to participate in Kanegasaki's October celebration of the tenth year of the Emily Dickinson Archive Center in the Kanegasaki Library. For the anniversary, the KSCC arranged to send several written and video messages of congratulations and gifts from the Committee and from various representatives of the Town's boards and committees as well as from the Dickinson Museum and the Jones Library.

During a good part of the year, the KSCC revisited its charge and discussed how best to continue the relationship with its sister city. Diana Stein became the Selectboard's liaison to the Committee, and Selectboard Chair Stephanie O'Keefe met with the Committee to discuss her view of the KSCC role. Recently appointed Library Director Sharon Sherry also attended a KSCC meeting to talk about the Jones Library's commitment to its sister library in Kanegasaki.

After discussions over several months, Committee members agreed that education, as it has in the past, must continue to be uppermost in the relationship, but that the KSCC ought to devote increased effort to pave the way for future visits to Kanegasaki by Amherst individuals and groups. We hope that effort will result in a new initiative to collaborate on such exchanges.

Both ideas were implemented during the year. The Town welcomed seven boys and nine girls from Kanegasaki Middle School and three of their chaperones, including two teachers from the school. Members of the community provided home stays for the students, and host families and KSCC members entertained the visitors throughout their stay. Both students and adults

returned to Kanegasaki with an increased appreciation of what the Amherst area offers to residents and visitors alike.

As part of our new initiative to pave the way for individuals to visit Kanegasaki, the Committee asked officials in Kanegasaki to support a visit from Bessie Young, a recent Amherst College graduate who hoped to continue her research on care for the elderly in Japan, and Kanegasaki hosted Ms. Young for two weeks in May and June. In addition, Ben Gilsdorf, whose family had hosted Kanegasaki students in March, also visited Kanegasaki during the summer to learn more about Japanese culture and to improve his language skills.

Exchanges between our two towns may become easier in the near future. Japan Air Lines now offers a direct flight between Tokyo and Boston. To learn more about the opportunities this may present, KSCC representatives attended the Boston Globe Travel Show at the private residence of the Consul General of Japan in Boston.

Throughout the year, work continued on the archives of the Committee, and a new project to preserve the history of the relationship between Amherst and Kanegasaki was begun: individuals active during the very early years of the KSCC were interviewed at Amherst Media, Amherst's Cable TV station. Once edited, the resulting videotapes will be stored in the Jones Library and shared with our sister city.

Copies of the videotapes, photographs, and a time line of important events held during the past twenty years will be shared with Kanegasaki as we celebrate our twentieth anniversary in 2013. As fiscal year 2012 closed, Committee members looked ahead with ideas for that celebration. As in the past, we invite Amherst townspeople to join the Sister-City Committee and to offer a helping hand when our Kanegasaki friends come to town.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Woods Masalski  
Interim Chair, Kanegasaki Sister City Committee